

Death Is Like A Carwash

(a movie idea)

©10.2.09, Jonathan D. Steinhoff

Claude dies and immediately thereafter finds himself speaking to angels in heaven.

"I just died!" Claude exclaims.

"Yes, we know," says Rupe, one of the angels.

"I know what happens when you die! It's amazing! It's like a carwash!"

"Yes, it is amazing, isn't it?" says Koop, the other angel, with great enthusiasm.

"No one knows about this! This information is worth a fortune!" exclaims Claude.

Rupe and Koop look at each other.

"Uh, well, Claude?" says Rupe.

"Yes?"

"Claude, you're in heaven now. There's no money here, and, well, you know, everyone up here already knows what happens when you die."

"No money? That's crazy!" Claude bursts out laughing.

Rupe and Koop look at Claude without saying anything. Claude becomes serious.

"So, uh, I see. So.... no money."

"Plus everyone already knows what happens when you die," Koop says.

"Everyone up here does," Claude states.

"Yes, exactly."

There's an awkward pause. "Well, if that's how it is, that's how it is."

"That's how it is."

"Right." Claude seems to be figuring something out. Suddenly he begins pretending that he's crying.

Rupe and Koop exchange looks of concern. Rupe speaks. "What's wrong, Claude?"

"Nothing!"

"Now, Claude. Obviously there's something wrong."

"It's nothing, it's nothing. Okay, well, now that I'm dead, I'll never get to tell Mary, she's my wife--"

"Yes, we know."

"Or rather, she was my wife--"

"Yes, of course."

"I'll never get to tell Mary I'm sorry!" Claude resumes pretending that he's crying.

"That's terrible!" Rupe says.

"How horrible!" Koop agrees.

"I know!" sobs Claude.

"Sorry about... what?" asks Rupe.

Claude breaks character for a moment. "What's that?"

"You said you never got to tell you're wife you're sorry. So I was wondering, 'Sorry about what?'"

"Oh yes, I see. Uh, well, uh, I'm sorry.... that I.... that I.... oh, I walked through her garden! She loved that garden! Yes, and I just walked right through it! I didn't care, I just stepped on all the flowers! And -- (Claude whispers) and she cried when I did that. (shouting) Oh, how Mary loved that garden! If only I could have told her how sorry I am!" Claude lowers his head, covers his face with his hands, and pretends to sob again.

"I don't remember Mary having a garden," Rupe says to Koop.

"Can't keep track of everything," Koop answers.

"He doesn't sound very happy about being dead."

"Not at all."

Rupe and Koop look at each other sadly. Koop nods to Rupe.

Rupe speaks. “Claude, there’s something some of us have been talking about trying out up here, maybe it’s something that would interest you.”

Claude stops sobbing but remains with his face down covered by his hands. “Go on, I’m listening.” His voice sounds suddenly more shrewd than emotional.

“Well, sometimes we get people up here who seem to have unfinished business back on Earth.”

“Uh huh, right?”

“And so maybe the best thing would be if we did something very, very-

“Very,” adds Koop.

“Very special in your case. Claude, how would you like to return to Earth, and tell Mary how sorry you are?”

Claude lifts his head, grinning from ear to ear. “You guys could do that? Oh man, you two are the best!”

“Now Claude, this would only be for the one purpose, to give you the opportunity to tell Mary you’re sorry. You’d have to return to heaven as soon as you were done.”

“Of course!”

“Just that one thing. And you couldn’t tell anyone that you had died, it would be as if you hadn’t. And you’d have to promise.”

“You got it! I promise! So when do I leave?”

Rupe and Koop look at each other solemnly. Suddenly Claude finds himself back on Earth, walking down the street, hands in his pockets.

He takes his left hand out of his pocket, revealing that his fingers are crossed. He smiles down at his crossed fingers and then puts the hand back in his pocket.

And so begins the story of a man intent on making a fortune out of his secret knowledge of what everyone else wants to know: what happens when you die. Much like a fugitive from justice, Claude buys a fake mustache, dons it, steals a wallet, and assumes someone else’s identity.

Rupe and Koop are shocked when they figure out that Claude has tricked them, and set out to track him down. However, Claude is very cunning, and much like someone out-sleuthing his hunter, he eludes Rupe and Koop whenever they seem to be closing in on him.

Claude’s plan to make a fortune from his secret requires that he find the man who witnessed his death. This will significantly help him to convince the world that he’s really dead. Rupe and Koop catch on, however, and bump off Claude’s witness. The witness is pleased at being dead, his first words in heaven being, “Hey! This is great! How’s the food up here?” And so it isn’t as if Rupe and Koop did anything all *that* horrible.

Claude tries everything to exploit his secret for monetary gain. Yet though he always seems to stay one step ahead of Rupe and Koop, at least enough to keep from being “captured”, nevertheless the angels manage to thwart all of Claude’s schemes.

Finally, Claude turns his story of what happens when you die into a movie. Rupe and Koop shrug their shoulders. “Oh well, no harm in that.” They walk away, leaving Claude his semi-victory.

The end credits come up.

THE END